

Devoted to the Future of You.

Jana-Lee Germaine, a poet from Lunenburg, MA, is the winner of the 2022 Patricia Dobler Poetry Award, sponsored by Carlow University's Madwomen in the Attic Creative Writing Workshops.

Named for the late poet and Carlow professor Patricia Dobler, who directed the Women's Center for Creative Writing and the Madwomen in the Attic workshops, this annual contest is open to women writers aged 40 and over who have not published a full-length book of poetry.

Germaine's poem, "First Night," with its singular, distinct voice and its willingness to risk, distinguished itself from a field of 470 entries.

Poet CM Burroughs, the judge of the 2022 Dobler Award, wrote this about Germaine's poem:

"First Night" is infused with transformative energy. The poem begins with the objective "Body" and the possibility of possession with "*could* be mine." [My italics.] The speaker does not occupy the body yet closes that distance by suggesting what they might do with the body, how they might dress it, giving both a depth of character through images including "patent and suede [heels]/that spark like 3000 volts/across the floor." The first possessive of the poem comes nearly halfway in— "my wedding ring"— this is the first object literally connected to the body then removed symbolically, resulting in the body being "no longer claimed." This does not uncomplicate the narrative, however; the speaker is a thief in the lines "I took this body all by myself/just grabbed it and ran," as if the body is something they have so little possessed that they must now steal it. The first-personal plural pronoun and possessive enters again with "my body that trusted me/like a child...we're going to be OK." This poem is a rich wrangling with one way a person can become wrenched from their body, their personhood—and how they can find a way back.

As winner of the 2022 Patricia Dobler Poetry Award, Germaine will receive \$1,000; a public reading in Pittsburgh, PA, with judge CM Burroughs in Spring 2023; round-trip travel and lodging for her public reading; and publication of her winning poem in *Voices from the Attic, Volume XXVIII*.

2022's honorable mentions are "Sing Our Rivers Red" (1<sup>st</sup> HM) by Susan J. Sample from Park City, UT; and "My Lips Are Stitched" (2<sup>nd</sup> HM) and "How to Make Berbere" (3<sup>rd</sup> HM) by Lisa Mullenneaux from New York, NY.

The remaining 2022 finalists are "Littoral Nocturne," Marion Brown, Bronxville, NY; "Not This Year," Helen Stevens Chinitz, Walton, NY; "Manifestation," Terri Mattila, St. Paul, MN; "The Clearing," Adrianna Robertson, Greenwich, CT; "All the Petals Have Fallen," Alissa Sammarco, Cincinnati, OH; "Signaling," Amanda Smith-Hatch, Ontario, NY; "Ghost House," Nancy V. Swanson, Pisgah Forest, NC; and "Solstice Lullaby," Kate Westhaver, Ashland, MA.

JANA-LEE GERMAINE's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *New Ohio Review*, *Nimrod*, *Cimarron Review*, *EcoTheo Review*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Sugar House Review*, *Presence*, *december*, *Rock & Sling*, *New South*, *The Windhover*, *Literary Mama*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Carolina Quarterly*, and elsewhere. She earned an MFA from Emerson College and is a senior poetry reader for *Ploughshares*. A survivor of domestic violence in her first marriage, she lives with her very nice second husband, four children, and four rescue cats in semi-rural Massachusetts.

CM BURROUGHS is associate professor of creative writing at Columbia College Chicago and author of *The Vital System* (Tupelo, 2012) and *Master Suffering* (Tupelo, 2021,) which was longlisted for the National Book Award and a finalist for the Lambda Book Award and *L.A. Times* Book Award. Burroughs' poetry has appeared in journals and anthologies including *Poetry*, *Ploughshares*, *Cave Canem's Gathering Ground*, and *Best American Experimental Writing*. Burroughs has been awarded fellowships and grants from Yaddo, MacDowell, Djerassi Foundation, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, and Cave Canem Foundation.

## First Night

Body I was learning again  
could be mine, the air around it

full of possible, soft  
like the shore at high tide.

Body like a doll whose hair  
I could twist in braids,

accessorize, slide  
freshly painted toes

into high heels, the kind  
I can't afford, patent and suede

that spark like 3000 volts  
across the floor.

Body I could sling  
in jeans or skirts – how tight,

how short – See these thighs,  
these calves. See how they walk

this unfamiliar skyline.  
See this bland beige room

where I first take off  
my wedding ring,

locking my former life  
in the hotel's closet safe.

This shiny-new finger,  
no longer claimed.

First night he doesn't know  
where I am, not even what city.

I took this body all by myself,  
just grabbed it and ran,

right through security,  
sat it on a plane next to strange men

*(new stanza)*

and pointed toward eternity.  
See this tired face,

this jaw I can hold  
with these hands,

long, knobby-knuckled,  
scarred on the thumb and index finger.

See this name I've undone,  
peeled the back part off,

then stuck like a "Hello"  
badge to the front of this chest.

Hello, body. This body,  
my body that trusted me

like a child I let down.  
I want to say oh body, I'm sorry.

It's a long way home now,  
but, body, we're going to be OK.